CIA/ Oswald Mexican intercepts/Post's 3rd-day coverage HW 11/28/76

Buried inside the Metro section is the brief attached (in Post file) story that is an even less adequate repor on the Phillips testimony that was on radio news last night. About midnight WWX WAVA's account had Phillips voice as he left the committee room. He said what one would expect, of no consequence, and refused to say what he had testified to on the spurious claim that he knew for his to say a single word would be in clear violation of law in the sense of a specific law. There is none, of course. This is no more than another device for building the story, for creating more interest in the following of that spoor. As the storu shows the committee has already sent investigators to Mexico to interview the translator and a typist.(Long assignments?)

(I suppose what no story indicates can be true, that Oswald spoke in Russian. Without this why a translator?)

That the committee would have to run off on this without having established any of the basic facts of the case was inevitable. Once the story was out it would have been criticised for not following it up. When it is hardly best prepared to. This means that what would have come out at some point and is a serious reflection on the CIA will be looked into when the possibilities of developing the entire story are poorest. It presages a duplication of the Schweiker runaround.

I think these developments completely validate my urgent recommendation that the very first thing the committee do, without any investigation of having its staff in more than the most skeletal form, be the taking of the most basic testimony about the homicide itself. This, also agreed to by Sprague, has not been done. And in both areas the committee is hard-running on the peripherla before it can organize and commence serious work.

The point in my yesterday morning's letter to Bush about Phillips' oath seems to have been well taken and within the consciousness of the CIA, which this story says "reminded" Phillips of that oath. The need mean no more than that the CIA is going through the motions of pretending detachment. If it prosecutes there will be meaning. He did violate what it classifies as national-security precautions and needs.

If comment on the Post's downplay of the first-page scoop it broke can vary with belief, even be attributed to different Sunday editors (from weekday), by normal standards most papers would be touting themselves in having beaten Congressional investigators to a story and boasting to their readers that this is how well the paper serves them. Five and a half column inches to report this, Phillips' testimony, the CIA's alleged warning to him and the expedition of the Congressional investigators is very little, especially when compared with the stock stuff in the large Sunday edition so little of which, however, is hard news. Putting national news in the Metro section is a further downplay. Atypical.

One could postulate that something worthy of news attention would be fed to get the committee on the wrongtrack. A puff story could not do this.

What can a thorough and successful investigation show? More of what is now ho-hum, that the agencies did less well than they could and should have. Nothing about the crime. More of the inconsequential Schweiker, more of the supposed defense of the Commission. This could not be ignored with Oswald the sole official nominee for assassin, as it could not under any circumstances because if he was not the assassin he was a patsy. At best it duplicates the leaking of the non-story of the Hosty letter and his destruction of it. This is not new. It has been reported. There will now be no basis for prosecuting anyone who claims little or no clear recollection, no basis for doing anything if there is the almost certain disagreement on details as in the Hosty case, and who now cares is Helms and his no longer in honchos were bad, bad boys? It means nothing but can help the committee's life.